Purchase of Protective Gears

2617. SHRI SUNDER SINGH BHANDARI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the steps taken to purchase protective gears for our troops against chemical weapons;

(b) whether the Chemical Weapons Convention also poses problems of inspection to the member-country's chemical industry; and

(c) whether OPCW members can be made liable for any breaches in the confidential business information in the chemical industries?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) Government are engaged continually in maintaining the required level of defence preparedness by equipping the armed forces with modernised and upgraded equipment Defence Purchases are accordingly effected, taking into account, inter alia, the assessment of the various perceived and anticipated threats.

(b) No, Sir. The inspection regime will apply in a uniform and transparent manner to all States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

(c) Yes, Sir. Personnel employed in the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) are liable for breaches of confidential business information in the chemical industry. The procedures in case of breaches or alleged breaches of confidentiality are provided for in the "Confidentiality Annex" of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Arrest of Indians by the Myanmar Authorities

2618. SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware about the seizure and arrest of Indian citizens by the Myanmar authorities;

(b) the number of persons released and persons still detained;

(c) whether it is a fact that as per the Indo-Myanmar Treaty, 40 Kms. belt on either side of the international border both in India and Myanmar is permitted for free movement;

(d) whether this Treaty is being violated by the Myanmar authorities;

(e) whether the Government of Manipur have reported the matter to the Home and External Affairs Ministries; and

(f) if so, the actions taken up by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) and (b) Government have information that 55 Indian citizens are presently detained in Myanmar. 10 Indian nationals have been released since 1994.

(c) There is no bilateral treaty between India and Myanmar for free movement across the border.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) & (f) The Government of Manipur have reported five incidents of arrest of Indian citizens and seizure of their properties including trucks used for collection of timber. These cases have been taken up with the Government of Myanmar. The Government of Myanmar has reported the arrest of Indian nationals in Myanmar in three incidents on charges of smuggling and violation of narcotics laws. They have denied arrest of Indian nationals in one incident; no information has been received in respect of one incident.